

Panther Recovery Implementation Team (PRIT)
Transportation SubTeam
Meeting Minutes
April 14, 2021
Webinar

Attendees:

Meredith Budd
Amber Crooks, Chair
Elizabeth Fleming, Core Team Liaison
Terry Gilbert
Don Scott
Brent Setchell
Daniel Smith
John Wrublik

Kristin Caruso
Niki Cribbs
Chris Dailey
William Freund
Nicole Monies
Ben Shepherd
Denise Rach
Rachael Uhland
Diana Umpierre

- Agenda and Introductions
 - No changes to the proposed agenda.
- Communications
 - No update from David Shindle (not in attendance). Elizabeth shared that the last hotspots report has not yet been sent out by the USFWS. The Subteam discussed and would still like for USFWS to send out the last iteration (dated June 2020, incorporating information through end of 2019) in the interest of time. Amber will resend.
- Minutes
 - Received edits from Brent and incorporated.
- Hotspots Update
 - The Subteam viewed the comparison between last cycle and the update. Brent and his team have sent out the kmz shapefile and summary document.
 - We looked more closely at the site of a recent panther mortality on CR846 Immokalee Road near the Camp Keais Strand. The mortality was near the existing panther crossing but west of the fencing.
 - It was confirmed that the minutes from the January 2021 meeting stand in terms of how this project is intended to be transitioned to FDOT; there was a discussion about how the chart that accompanies the map should be updated.

- There was a consensus that since the map did not change dramatically from last year but there were some changes, that the Subteam would produce a document that showed the updated map, copy over the methodology and introduction pages, and not include the detailed project sheets for each area. We can add a statement that the project sheets will only be updated from time (i.e. biannually or every 5 years).
- ICOET conference
 - The Subteam agreed that they would pursue a session where more than just the hotspot report could be presented. The pursued format would be a 90-minute session, which allowed for about 15-20 minutes per presentation (although more may be afforded to Brent for a combined presentation and less for the introduction that Elizabeth would provide).
 - The lineup would be as follows: Elizabeth re introduction, Brent re I-4 connectivity and retrofits to existing bridges, Niki Cribbs re HotSpots GIS mapping, Dan re LCP modeling, Q&A.
 - Must provide separate abstracts for all parts of the presentation. Abstract due by April 23, 2021
 - There was some discussion about the type of things that Elizabeth would speak to the agenda, from recovery efforts, existing wildlife crossings, overview of the threat of panther-vehicle collisions, and human-wildlife conflict reduction/safety.
 - Dan writing up draft session summary to the smaller group to comment and make edits. Elizabeth will act as the lead to plan future planning calls for those participating.
- Report dissemination ideas
 - Amber stated that this agenda item was generated after brainstorming with Elizabeth; there is an interest to ensure that our products are available and utilized where appropriate. Would be good to have these out and available to agencies, elected officials, the public, NGOs, consultants, and any other interested or relevant party. That way it would help to ensure that these reports aren't just sitting on the shelf.
 - Ideas generated so far-
 - CFX decision-makers and consultants
 - ETDM
 - Amber asked if the hot spots information was there? FDOT said it was not yet, but they would look into adding. Amber also asked about including the I-4 locations as well. Dan said that typically the type of information on the ETDM webpage were GIS shapefiles, not reports. Amber said that if there was support for adding the GIS shapefile showing the I-4 spots to ETDM, the metadata could include a link to the full report, but at least it would red flag for projects that may have a nexus with these limited opportunities for permeability.

- Elizabeth expressed an interest for FDOT to provide a presentation at the next meeting about ETDM. Katasha or counterpart could present at the next meeting re ETDM
 - Elizabeth suggested the Subteam develop a recipient list for I-4 report. Others could help to disseminate the hotspots and/or I-4 report to these recipient lists, if the Service did not have capacity. Elizabeth will inquire on this with David Shindle in the future.
- Least Cost Pathway report
 - Subteam members Dan, Elizabeth, Amber, and Meredith will begin drafting sections soon.
 - Dan mentioned that FWC released a new land cover map last fall.
- Sharing of Information
 - Alico Road Extension
 - Amber showed a map of the proposed roadway alignment. There was some question amongst the Subteam about the chosen alignment, and about the wetlands impacts and connectivity being severed. Don suggested that alignment may have been because of existing ROW. There was also some discussion about the future land use of this area and status of the mines in proximity to the roadway. Dan mentioned he is working on an evaluation along Corkscrew Road and north of Wildblue.
 - Central Florida Expressway
 - Elizabeth mentioned there are three EAGs for three ongoing PD&Es. Osceola-Brevard connector associated with Deseret Ranch; Northeast connector Phase I scheduled to be concluded by October 2021; CFX South Port connector scheduled to be concluded by November 2021. Elizabeth would like assistance in analyzing impacts to panthers.
 - Elizabeth also raised the SR414 expressway extension project, which is also having EAG meetings. Dan said that this is near urban Maitland and there aren't really panther issues in this area.
 - Elizabeth asked if FDOT was coordinating with CFX and Brent suggested Katasha would know more.
 - Elizabeth asked if the LCP study parts could be available for use in the commenting process.
 - Regarding I-4 permeability, the Brightline project was discussed. In the I-4 area, it is proposed in the median, and so it was flagged that they should be designed to accommodate.
 - Collier County bridges
 - Moving forward, no new update. End result are bridges do not likely provide sufficient vertical clearance to accommodate large mammals. Meredith mentioned that the Gator Canal bridge which is along CR846 near the Camp Keais Strand is under construction and close to a recent panther mortality.
 - Wildlife Crossings bill proposed

- Dan mentioned that there is ~\$250 million proposed for connectivity purchases or crossings. There was a discussion about FDOT or Subteam members to start compiling a list of projects we think are important, if funding was to become available. Brent said that FDOT is starting to create such lists now.
- Vanderbilt Ext
 - Brent stated that the County is pursuing adding shelves on their roadway, the current vertical clearance is 4'
- CR74 Glades County near Fisheating Creek
 - The project is for side drain culvert replacement and resurfacing, so less opportunity to get a structure incorporated. LCP is in the area; most of the current documented mortalities are on US27.
- SR29/MCORES
 - Meredith asked what the status of SR29 is, the section between I-75 to Oil Well Road. Brent said there is no funding. Elizabeth said that the project was looking to MCORES for the funding. Dan was working as a sub consultant with Metric Consulting. Dan said that they should know later this summer about the status. Elizabeth said there are two weeks left in the legislative session, and there are two MCORES bills, one that is 'in play.'
- RADS
 - Brent indicated FDOT has determined it will decommission the existing RAD system along US 41 near Turner River. Brent stated FDOT plans to incorporate the area immediately adjacent to the existing land bridge west of the RV park in an upcoming advertisement for a new RAD system which utilizes newer technology such as radar and/or thermal imaging.
 - Additionally, as the majority of panther vehicle collisions occurred immediately east of Turner River, FDOT will add the replacement of the existing US 41 Turner River bridge to its bridge replacement priority list and include a higher vertical clearance and wildlife shelves, but funding will likely be 10+ years away.
 - FDOT is looking to install a new RAD system north of the FPNWR along SR29. There will be three years of maintenance associated with the new system. FDOT expects to advertise this fall for the contract work, with installation hopefully by this time next year.
- Resurfacing of I-75 Alligator Alley/land bridge
 - The timber and concrete pile bridges crossing the canals for access to the existing I-75 culverts by wildlife is scheduled for the 2022-2023 timeframe. The resurfacing project is split into 3 segments. Amber mentioned comments in the Collier County Watershed Improvement Plan letter by FWC with some concern about water levels in the culverts. Brent mentioned that Darrell Lands expressed similar concerns in a separate conversation and Brent inquired with the Engineer on the project who

indicated stages within the I-75 canals are only expected to have a minimal increase.

- Public comment – none.
- Next Subteam meeting is scheduled for 07/14/21 afternoon.
 - Agenda items to include ETDM. Potential agenda items could include presentation by Inwood Consults, Crosstek Wildlife Solutions.